

Book is fascinating account of island life in the 1970s

BY LUCY GARCIA

A REMARKABLE new book will be published next month which details life on a Hebridean island in the early 1970s.

Bearnaraigh na Hearadh, or 'Tis 50 Years Since – a Study of Life in a Hebridean Island Community has been written by Susanne Barding, a Danish anthropologist now living in the Faroe Islands, who undertook research in Berneray as a young woman during 1970-72.

The book is a substantial and comprehensive account running to some 600 pages and containing more than 100 contemporary black and white photographs of one particular community at one unique point in time.

Published by the Islands Book Trust (IBT), it will be launched on Berneray (Bearnaraigh na Hearadh) in the Sound of Harris, now joined by causeway to North Uist, on September 29.

The book includes the life histories of three siblings – John Ferguson, Rebecca Ferguson, and Mary MacAskill – as related to Barding in the 1970s, together with many



stories and anecdotes gathered from the community.

Life on Berneray in the early 1970s was far removed from the romantic rural idyll imagined by many from the outside.

It was dominated by hard work and economic necessity on the croft and at sea, by a difficult and unforgiving climate and by social

conventions which were sometimes restrictive but which helped the community to survive and underpinned a rich and distinctive Gaelic culture.

The book records in meticulous detail how the crofting community operated, for example, the use of the inbye land and common grazings; the seasonal movement of livestock to and from offshore islands; fishing; peat-cutting; domestic life; Gaelic traditions, the church; and the role of men and women, young and old, in their interactions, personal challenges and social life.

Chapter headings include: History of Berneray; Life Histories; Stories; Population; Crofting; Lobster Fishing; Wool; Men, Women and Work; Networks; Values and Social Control; Identity; Ceilidh and Visit; Summer Dance; and New Year Traditions.

An Index of People lists more than 300 men and women, mainly from Berneray, who are mentioned in the book, along with their dates of birth and death – a valuable social document in its own right.

The author has also been able to place her precise and insightful observations of 1970s Berneray



within a much wider context, both in the geographical sense of other island communities – not only in the Hebrides but also in the Northern Isles of Scotland and the Faroes – and in terms of changes over time, taking account of the influences which have driven economic and social trends throughout Europe, including Scottish islands, over the last half century.

The subtitle of the book deliberately echoes Walter Scott's ground-breaking and most successful historical novel Waverley or 'Tis Sixty Years Since, written 60 years after the period of the 1745 Rising in which its action is set.

Barding will return to Berneray for the first time in 50 years for the launch, which will be followed by a community ceilidh.

Danish anthropologist Susanne Barding will return to Berneray for the first time in 50 years for the book's launch

£200k Ukraine groups boost

ORGANISATIONS which have helped displaced Ukrainians integrate into communities in Edinburgh will receive a share of Scottish Government funding.

The money will help secure jobs, access mental health services and host English lessons. Edinburgh Voluntary Organisations' Council, Volunteer Edinburgh, the Welcoming Project and Feniks will receive £50,000 each, and the Association of Ukrainians in Great Britain £15,000.

Migration Minister Emma Roddick said: "As we look ahead to Ukraine's independence day on Thursday, our message remains that we stand with you and we want Scotland to be your home for as long as you need it."

Art fair to host largest-ever display of north-east talent

ABERDEEN Art Fair will host its largest-ever display of local talent this year.

The three-day art festival kicks off for its 11th year on Friday, September 1 at the Aberdeen Music Hall, and will showcase more than 1000 contemporary artworks from hundreds of different artists.

Galleries and professional artists from across the UK will host their own individual stands, but this year the fair will see its largest-ever contingent of local talent.

The Aberdeen Artists Society – an artist-led organisation which aims to raise awareness of contemporary visual arts in the area – will put on its largest and most expansive display of work by artists from the north-east of Scotland.

Bryan Angus, spokesperson for

the society, said: "Aberdeen Artists Society exists to promote the wealth of exceptional art and artists within the North-east of Scotland.

"We actively explore new ways to increase opportunities for our members, and we are excited to be represented by our artists, greatly expanding our presence in the most significant weekend in Aberdeen's visual arts year."

Artists showing with the society include Bryan Angus, Fiona Matheson, Ann Bowes, Colin Heggie, Troy Stuart, Joyce Taylor and Kathryn McFarlane, among others.

Gerry Muldoon, AAF organiser, said: "We are delighted that AAS have chosen to expand their presence at this year's event and they, along with art galleries and professional



Bryan Angus is among the artists showing their work at the fair

artists from across the country are looking forward to exhibiting their work to the North-east public, who will again enjoy free admission to the event."

The fair is free admission, promoting an "art for all" policy, and organisers have promised that there will be something "for every budget, taste and style" on offer.



She has lived in the Faroe Islands since 1974, working on books and as a teacher, and only since retirement has she had the opportunity to write up all the material she collected on Berneray all those years ago.

The result is an amazing book, combining intimate life histories and personal stories with her professional insights.

● Priced £20 (ISBN 978-1-907443-83-1), *Bearnaraigh na Hearadh, or 'Tis 50 Years Since – a Study of Life in a Hebridean Island Community is available from www.islandsbooktrust.org or bookshops throughout the Outer Hebrides and beyond. For more details, contact John Randall at john673randall@btinternet.com or phone IBT on 07930 801899*



The book contains more than 100 contemporary black and white photographs. Clockwise from top left: taking a break from peat cutting; Berneray resident John MacDonald baiting a creel; and another islander, Annie Ferguson at the croft where she grew up



Trials move 'would restrict access to justice', MSP warns

BY GREGOR YOUNG

MOVING jury trials from island sheriff courts to the mainland restricts rural Scotland's access to justice, Justice Secretary Angela Constance has been warned.

New jury trials which would have called at Stornoway, Lerwick, Portree and Lochmaddy Sheriff Courts will instead call at Inverness, Aberdeen or Peterhead due to "staff challenges" with the prisoner escort service operated by GeoAmey.

Highlands and Islands Sheriff Principal Derek Pyle issued an order of court last month which made the changes effective until further notice, but emphasised it should be a temporary measure.

However, Orkney's MSP, Liam McArthur, has written to Constance to demand steps are taken to re-instate the solemn trials as quickly as possible.

The Liberal Democrat MSP said the measure was "wholly unacceptable" as islanders who will be impacted as witnesses, victims and lawyers face additional travel to the mainland.

McArthur said: "The suspension of jury trials in Kirkwall and other courts during the pandemic was understandable.

"However, this was supposed to be a temporary measure in response to extraordinary circumstances and that once restrictions were lifted jury trials would return to courts across Scotland.

"The fact that the failure of a private contractor to fulfil its contract has led again to the centralising of trials is wholly unacceptable. At the very least this will have the effect of restricting access to justice at a local level.

"As well as the impact on those facing trial, this move will affect witnesses, victims and lawyers representing their clients. All now face the prospect of extra cost in time and travel to attend court.

"I have written to the Justice Secretary highlighting these concerns and seeking urgent reassurance that steps will be taken to allow jury trials to be reinstated in Kirkwall.

"Depending on the response I receive, I will be raising this in the chamber when Parliament returns from recess at the start of next month."

Under the Sheriff Principal's order, existing jury trials in Lochmaddy on North Uist and Portree on Skye will move to Inverness, while scheduled trials in Stornoway and Lerwick will continue as normal, as will all other court business.

National Trust for Scotland appoints new ambassador to support coastlines

BY LIAM MCLAUGHLIN

THE National Trust for Scotland (NTS) has appointed "vet, adventurer and oceans advocate" Dr Cal Major as an ambassador, who said she hopes to use her "love of Scotland" to inspire others.

Based in Ullapool, Major spends much of her time on and in the sea around the country.

The new ambassador role is designed to help the NTS raise support for its conservation work in the coastlines, marine environments and more than 400 islands under its care including the dual World Heritage Site St Kilda.

Major said: "I'm a proud supporter of the National Trust for Scotland and I am beyond delighted to have been asked to be an ambassador for

them and the work they do. It feels like such a privilege to be part of a community of people who care just as much as I do about Scotland's wildlife and heritage.

"Developing personal connections to nature through first-hand experiences of its powerful impact are a core part of my work in ocean conservation.

"I hope that through my love of the sea, I can help the NTS to do even more to protect these special places and to inspire more people to support the work they do, for the love of Scotland."

Her belief in exposure to the ocean being key to a healthy mind led Major to set up her own charity, Seafu, which takes inner city schoolchildren and Ukrainian refugees to idyllic locations around

the UK to discover the benefits of the ocean for the mind.

She recently visited the Treshnish Isles, west of Mull in the Inner Hebrides, the newest property to come into the care of the Trust.

NTS chief executive Philip Long said: "Scotland's seas and marine life are facing major challenges as the impacts of the climate and biodiversity crises are becoming ever more evident and it is so important that we speak up for our heritage that doesn't have a voice.

"Cal's love of Scotland's seas and our nation's environment comes through in all she does.

"We know she will speak passionately about Scotland's nature, beauty and heritage and help our charity to gain even greater support for our work."



Dr Cal Major will help the NTS raise support for its conservation work in the coastlines, marine environments and more than 400 islands under its care